

VISION FOR THE BETTENDORF CATHOLIC CHURCH

DECISION PATHWAY

When faced with making a complex decision, a certain path of logic often leads the way, with each decision leading inevitably to the next one. Analysis and decisions by the Bettendorf Vision Committee in five areas – **Catholic Mission, Catholic School, Facilities, Bettendorf Population, and Priest Shortage** – have led to a “short list” of three options that will be presented to parishioners and ultimately Bishop Zinkula.



Catholic Mission

In its recent teaching, the Catholic Church tells us that parish communities must “come out of themselves” to collaborate in works of mercy and proclamation of the gospel. They must also become “true missionary outposts,” characterized by hospitality, a life of prayer, celebration of all sacraments, and attention to the poor.

What is needed to attain these worthy goals in Bettendorf? A good start would be vigorous new ministries for vocation formation, outreach to the poor, and evangelization of the unchurched and Catholics who no longer attend mass. Youth ministry and young adult ministry are also areas to grow in. But these would need space

and staff, which are commodities currently in short supply in the two parishes. Cooperation and perhaps merger would better meet the needs of the expanded concept of mission. Merging and clustering of parishes is a growing practice, not only locally but across the country. This provides for better stewardship of parish resources.

Catholic School

The path of logic tells us that faith formation is part of the mission, and Catholic schools are part of faith formation. This was affirmed by the Scott County Catholic Schools study in 2019 and supported by the Diocese of Davenport; and it called for continuation of the four parish-based Catholic grade schools in Scott County. Going west to east, these schools are JFK on Division Street, All Saints on Marquette, St Paul’s on Rusholme Street and Our Lady of Lourdes.

It has also been concluded by diocesan review and the Bettendorf Vision Committee that Catholic schools should be an integral part of the future church in Bettendorf; that is to say, grade schools should not be at a remote, separate location decoupled from a church.

Facilities

A detailed review showed that bringing the current Our Lady of Lourdes (OLOL) facilities up to code, upgrading the technology, and simply making them meet safety standards would be quite costly. The current buildings also have a substantial amount of asbestos, and abatement is extremely expensive. Upgrading of HVAC and electrical systems are needed. Due to multiple additions there are multiple stairways. Several levels have been added. Handicap accessibility is lacking except for the first floor. The school and church buildings have been expanded where possible over time, but the layout of patchwork additions does not provide for efficient

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use. The roof needs substantial work, or full replacement. This, coupled with the challenges presented by the proximity to the new bridge, makes relocating and new facilities designed for 21st century learning the logical solution.

The St. John Vianney (SJV) facility has its drawbacks too. Space to accommodate youth ministry, adult meetings, and administration are in short supply. Even though Covid-19 has changed patterns of gathering for now, space is at a premium and will be important to facilitate ministry growth in the future. The current building footprint does not allow for horizontal expansion because the required parking area must be preserved. The current building was not initially designed to support a vertical expansion.

Bettendorf Population

Bettendorf finds itself in the enviable position of having a projected population gain of 8,000 people by 2035, with most of that growth occurring in the northeast part of the city. Since one in four residents are Catholic, this could represent an additional 2,000 new parishioners.

A study done for this project recently showed that the geographic distributions of the congregations for both SJV and OLOL were virtually identical. The Committee concluded that a church located in the northeast part of the city would be closer to anticipated growth, while still being able to draw people from the entire city. Another advantage to the northeast is availability of large tracts of unbuilt land.

Priest Shortage

The reality is the Diocese of Davenport is facing a true lack of ordained priests. In the diocese there are currently 55 active priests. By the year 2030 only 22 will be under the retirement age of 70. Already, 52 of the 72 parishes in the diocese share pastors. While fewer priests is not justification by itself to look at new configurations for parishes, it is a significant factor.

Bringing priests from overseas has proved difficult. At some point in the future, it is likely the parishes in Bettendorf will share a pastor with some priest assistance. Because the administration of parishes is one of the called duties of a pastor, only certain men are gifted and prepared for this role, particularly in larger parishes that by nature are more complex. New models of priestly ministry are defining how priests and pastors best care for the administrative (temporal) and the pastoral (spiritual) needs of people. While a shortage of priests is not the main reason relocation is under discussion, it is a reality and one of the many reasons for a possible merger. Regardless of whether it is part of this discussion, the shortage will be determined by the diocese and very well could be a part of both of our futures within a few years.

Funding

Financial feasibility studies would be conducted to identify the potential for raising significant capital dollars. Depending on the outcome and potential measured, this would impact the style of the buildings, the materials that can be used in construction, and possible phasing of the project.